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June 15, 2006

Chairman Jerry Lewis
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
H-218 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lewis:

As the general counsel of some of our nation's leading corporations, we are asking for your help. The Legal Services Corporation (LSC), the primary legal lifeline to millions of Americans in times of need, is in jeopardy of having its already inadequate funding further eroded. Today, LSC's funding is less than one-half of the inflation-adjusted dollars that Congress appropriated in FY 1980, and ten million dollars less than the FY 2003 appropriation. In his FY 2007 budget request, President Bush has proposed an additional 4.6 percent decrease from the current \$326.6 million appropriation to \$310.9 million. We are asking you to reverse this diminution of critical funds by supporting the Corporation's FY 2007 budget request of \$411.8 million.

Due to recent cuts to the LSC appropriation and rising inflation rates, LSC-funded programs have struggled to help the growing number of our country's impoverished. Poverty statistics show that between 2002 and 2004, the number of people eligible for LSC services increased from 47 million to 49.7 million, which is about one in every six Americans. Sadly, of these nearly 50 million people, more than one third of them are children. To put clients' need in perspective: a family of four must earn a meager \$25,000 or less to qualify.

LSC-funded programs simply cannot keep up with the demand for services. *Documenting the Justice Gap*, a year-long study released by LSC in October 2005, revealed that at least 50 percent of eligible clients were turned away from LSC-funded programs due to a lack of resources. In other words, for every client served, at least one eligible client is turned away. While this statistic reflects the vast unmet need, it is, nonetheless, an underestimate and does not take into account the countless eligible people who did not seek assistance because they were not aware that LSC-funded programs could help them.

We are extremely concerned that cuts to LSC funding will have a harmful affect on our judicial system, our economy and businesses, and our society in general. While we are mindful of the severe fiscal constraints under which the Congress finds itself, we ask you to act now to ensure that essential civil legal services continue to make differences in the lives of those in need. Please support a FY 2007 LSC appropriation of \$411.8 million and join us in upholding the American promise of "*justice for all.*"

Sincerely,

Kenneth C. Frazier
Merck & Co., Inc.
Chair, NLADA Corporate Advisory
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Catherine A. Lamboley
Shell Oil Company
Immediate Past Chair, NLADA Corporate
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